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ABSTRACT

Love and loneliness hold special interest at a time when divorce and geographical mobility pull so many people apart. Attachment theory offers a useful integrative framework to study adolescent and adult love and loneliness. Attachment theory has three propositions: (1) when an individual is confident an attachment figure will be available when he desires, the person will be less prone to fear; (2) confidence in availability of attachment figures is built up over the years of immaturity; and (3) varied expectations of responsiveness of attachment figures that individuals develop during years of immaturity are basically accurate reflections of their experiences. The continuity of attachment style across the lifespan is probably maintained in a number of interrelated ways including emotional, cognitive, and behavioral ways. The organization of a child's attachment behavior tends to persist across the lifespan. Early attachment behavior and later romantic love share similarities. Differences exist between anxious/ambivalent lovers and secure lovers. Transient loneliness is a natural component of attachment-system activations. Three kinds of people emerge from attachment studies: those relatively secure who have enjoyed reasonable parenting, those who are anxious/ambivalent in close relationships and low in ego-resilience, and those avoidant in close relationships who were rebuffed in early secure attachment efforts. An attachment approach to love and loneliness holds promise for both theory and research. References and figures are appended. (ABL)

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BEING LONELY, FALLING IN LOVE:

Perspectives from Attachment Theory

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Love and loneliness hold special interest at a time in history when divorce and geographical mobility pull so many people apart. I assume that some such disruptive social conditions lie behind the dramatic increase in social scientific research on emotions and close relationships. Fifteen years ago, one could hardly find love and loneliness in personality and social psychology textbooks; today these topics rate a chapter of their own. Nevertheless, the field still lacks a theoretical framework within which to place the growing body of research on love and loneliness. We know more than we did 15 years ago about these powerful emotions, but the facts have yet to be coherently organized.

Today I hope to show--rather sketchily, I'm afraid, given time constraints--that attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980) offers a useful integrative framework. Attachment theory, originally proposed by John Bowlby and based on observations of human infants who were separated from their mothers, has proven extremely useful in the study of early social life and early personality development (see reviews by Maccoby, 1980, and Bretherton, 1985). I believe, in line with suggestions first articulated by Robert Weiss in 1973, that it will also prove useful in studies of adolescent and adult love and loneliness.

I will begin with a brief summary of the theory. Some of you are already familiar with it, no doubt, but I want to emphasize features that are particularly relevant to recent research on love and loneliness.

Bowlby noted that when a human infant is separated from its primary caregiver (usually mother), the infant goes through a predictable series of emotional reactions: first <u>protest</u>, then <u>despair</u>, then <u>detachment</u>. He hypothesized that these reactions are part of a <u>behavioral system</u>, a genetically determined set of behaviors (crying, smiling, clinging, making eye contact,

crawling, and so on) which, under normal social conditions, function to achieve a set goal--in this case, a safe degree of proximity to the caregiver. (Bowlby also noted that the set-goal changes in response to illness, pain, darkness, unfamiliar surroundings, and so on--all conditions associated with possible harm to the infant.)

The attachment system, as this behavioral system is called, is just one among a number of interlocking behavioral systems which include exploration, caregiving, and sexual mating. Of these, the attachment system is fundamental because it develops first and affects the functioning of the other systems. Bowlby and other observers have noted, for example, that when an infant or toddler is in the presence of its mother, it seems interested in exploring and mastering the environment and in establishing affiliative contact with other people. (In the attachment literature this is called "using the mother as a secure base.") When mother becomes unavailable, however, the infant seems preoccupied with regaining her presence, and exploration and socializing fall off dramatically. Thus, to use Bowlby's terms, the exploration system can be disturbed or preempted by activation of the attachment system. As I will explain later, I think the same set of priorities holds with respect to the mating (or sexual) system and the caregiving system: Attachment concerns can interfere with the optimal functioning of these behavioral systems, just as it does with exploration, and thereby cause what might be called love disorders.

The first slide (SLIDE 1) summarizes the attachment system. Notice that it has three major components: the one in the upper right-hand portion of the diagram involves secure and joyful feelings and behaviors; the one in the lower left portion is associated with experienced fear and anxious, clingy behavior; the one at the lower right, motivated by conflicting fears, is associated with

defensive avoidance of attachment behaviors. These three loops will be crucial to the remainder of my comments.

The attachment system would be extremely interesting even if its operation and effects were confined to infancy. But Bowlby and his followers claim that early social experiences related to attachment have long-lasting effects; in fact, these experiences are thought to be among the major determinants of personality and social life. The implications are evident in the following excerpt from Bowlby's 1973 volume, where he summarizes attachment theory in three propositions:

"The first [proposition] is that when an individual is confident that an attachment figure will be available to him whenever he desires it, that person will be much less prone to either intense or chronic fear than will an individual who for any reason has no such confidence. [In other words, secure attachment is the foundation of self-confidence.] The second proposition concerns the sensitive period during which such confidence develops. It postulates that confidence in the availability of attachment figures, or a lack of [such confidence], is built up slowly during the years of immaturity--infancy, childhood, and adolescence--and that whatever expectations are developed during those years tend to persist relatively unchanged throughout the rest of life. The third proposition concerns the role of actual experience. It postulates that the varied expectations of the accessibility and responsiveness of attachment figures that individuals develop during the years of immaturity are tolerably accurate reflections of the experiences those individuals have actually had" (Bowlby, 1973, p. 235).

The continuity of attachment style across the lifespan is probably maintained in a number of interrelated ways (emotional, cognitive, and

behavioral), but Bowlby has emphasized cognitive continuity in the form of inner working models of self and others, or of self and social life. The self aspect of these models is complementary to the relationship aspect, as Bowlby explains in the following passage:

"Confidence that an attachment figure is, apart from being accessible, likely to be responsive [turns] on at least two variables: (a) whether or not the attachment figure is judged to be the sort of person who in general responds to calls for support and protection; [and] (b) whether or not the self is judged to be the sort of person towards whom anyone, and the attachment figure in particular, is likely to respond in a helpful way. Logically these variables are independent [that is, the attachment figure might logically be judged unresponsive without that necessarily implying a deficient self]. [But] In practice [the two] are likely to be confounded. As a result, the model of the attachment figure and the model of the self are likely to develop so as to be complementary and mutually confirming" (1973, p. 238).

Bowlby's contention, that the organization of a young child's attachment behavior tends to persist across the lifespan, is supported by a growing number of prospective longitudinal and retrospective interview studies (e.g., Dontas, Maratos, Fafoutis, & Karangelis, 1985; Erikson, Sroufe, & Egelund, 1985; Hazan & Shaver, 1986; Main, Kaplan, & Cassidy, 1985; Ricks, 1985; Sroufe, 1983; Waters, Wippman, & Sroufe, 1979). Does this mean, my colleagues and I have wondered, that adult romantic love--which can be conceptualized as an attachment process (Shaver, Hazan, & Bradshaw, in press)--is affected by early attachment experiences? For me, the intuitive plausibility of this idea is enhanced when I consider parallels such as the following (SLIDE 2):

1. The formation and quality of the attachment bond in infancy depends on the attachment figure's perceived sensitivity and responsiveness (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978). Adult love feelings, too, according to Dorothy Tennov's 1979 interview study are associated with an intense desire for the lover's (real or imagined) interest and reciprocation. Moreover, the infant's feelings of joy and distress depend on the attachment figure's perceived responsiveness, just as adult lovers' moods depend on perceptions of their partner's reciprocation or rejection. Romantic love is sometimes described as an emotional roller coaster for this reason. (As I will show in a moment, the roller coaster is steeper and scarier for some people than for others.)

2. When the infant's attachment relationship is secure, the infant is happier, has a higher threshold for distress, is more willing to explore unfamiliar environments and interact with strangers. When adults are in love, they often report being more relaxed, less worried, less defensive, more creative and spontaneous, and more courageous (Shaver, Schwartz, Kirson, & O'Connor, in press).

3. In infancy, attachment behaviors include several methods of maintaining proximity and contact--holding, touching, caressing, kissing, rocking, smiling, making eye contact, following, and so on. Adult romantic love involves all of the same contact-maintaining behaviors.

4. At both ages, infancy and adulthood, separation causes intense distress, initiates vigorous, attention-consuming reunion efforts, and results in terrible sadness if reunion proves impossible. As adolescents and adults know, and as infants show by their behavior, it is very hard to think about anything else when one is preoccupied by separation from or loss of one's primary attachment figure.

5. At both ages there seems to be an intense desire to share discoveries (in the infant's case, rocks, pieces of lint, novel objects; in the lover's case, sights, feelings, music, foods, possessions, etc.), and there is an intense sensitivity to the attachment figure's applause and approval. People of all ages seem to be especially proud of themselves and self-satisfied when an attachment figure offers enthusiastic approval.

6. Finally, infants coo, sing, talk baby talk, and so on, and mothers talk "motherese," a baby-attuned style of communication. Adult lovers do something similar, talking baby talk and motherese to each other and using short affectionate names (Jimmie, honey, snookums, etc.). (Incidentally, I find when I talk about this in class that most students become deeply uncomfortable and embarrassed, suggesting that they do act like this in private but without ever having thought much about it.)

The list of similarities between early attachment and later romantic love could be made much longer (see Shaver et al., in press), but perhaps you get the idea: For some reason, early attachment behaviors and later expressions of romantic love have a great deal in common. I feel about this the same way Melvin Konner (1982) must have when he said: "The evolution of the brain would have to be considered unparsimonious if it were not able to draw upon the same basic capacities of emotion and action in the various settings where strong attachment is called for" (p. 298).

According to this view, romantic love is not a cultural creation of Western society, as some writers have claimed (e.g., Averill, 1985; de Rougement, 1940), but a universal process by which attachments are formed. Twenty-five hundred years ago the poet Sapho described romantic love in terms immediately familiar to us:

It's no use Mother dear,
I can't finish my weaving
You may blame Aphrodite
soft as she is
she has almost killed me
with love for that boy

In another excerpt Sappho makes the comparison I wish to make today between early and later attachment behaviors:

Afraid of losing you
I ran fluttering
like a little girl
after her mother

(Fragments 12 and 54 from a 1958 translation of Sappho's work.)

Styles of Attachment

Comparison of attachment behaviors across the lifespan is greatly facilitated by the work of Mary Ainsworth and others (e.g., Ainsworth et al., 1978), who have identified three major styles of attachment observable in the interactions of infants and parents. The first of these is called secure attachment and is characteristic of infants whose primary caregiver is generally available and responsive to the infant's needs. The second is called anxious/ambivalent attachment and is characteristic of infants whose primary caregiver is also anxious and seemingly out of sync with the infant's needs, being sometimes available and responsive but at other times unavailable or intrusive. These infants, in the grip of a powerful partial reinforcement schedule, become persistently anxious, clingy, and preoccupied with attachment. The third style is called avoidant attachment and is characteristic of infants whose primary caregiver is generally unresponsive if not outright rejecting. The anxious/ambivalent babies are repeatedly placed in the emotional state Bowlby

called "protest," and the avoidant babies are pushed into the state he called "detachment." If these self-protective patterns are maintained long enough, they--along with the cognitive appraisals that evoke them--can become stable components of personality. They are what gets organized into Bowlby's working models of self and relationships.

In an effort to see whether these same categories apply to adult love styles, Cindy Hazan and I recently completed two studies. One was a large survey conducted in the Rocky Mountain News, Denver's largest-circulation newspaper. The other was a study of students in a freshman course I teach at the University of Denver. This second study was conducted mainly as a check on the relative frequencies of attachment styles obtained in the newspaper study, because we were afraid that the newspaper figures might be biased by self-selection. The freshman study also allowed us to add new measures, including measures of loneliness. In order to save time, I will discuss the results of the two studies together and be content to describe the overall pattern of findings, omitting many details.

The questionnaire was called a Love Quiz. It contained 56 items concerning the respondent's most significant romantic love relationship, a host of demographic questions, questions about self and love relationships inspired by Bowlby's conception of inner working models, and adjective checklists designed to describe the respondent's relationship with mother and father and the parents' relationship with each other. It also contained a single-item measure of romantic attachment style, shown in the next slide (SLIDE 3).

As I hope you can see, 53 percent of the 620 newspaper respondents and 56 percent of the 108 college freshmen chose the secure alternative: "I find it relatively easy to get close to others and am comfortable depending on them and

having them depend on me. I don't often worry about being abandoned or about someone getting too close to me." The remaining respondents in both studies split fairly evenly between the two insecure categories. From 23 to 26 percent classified themselves as avoidant by saying: "I am somewhat uncomfortable being close to others; I find it difficult to trust them completely, difficult to allow myself to depend on them. I am nervous when anyone gets too close, and often, love partners want me to be more intimate than I feel comfortable being." In both studies, 20 percent classified themselves as anxious/ambivalent: "I find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like. I often worry that my partner doesn't really love me or won't want to stay with me. I want to merge completely with another person, and this desire sometimes scares people away." Since the proportions were so similar in the two studies, we tentatively conclude that self-selection was not a major biasing factor in the newspaper study. Interestingly, the relative frequencies of the three attachment styles in our studies are similar to the proportions found in the typical study of infants in this country (Campos, Barrett, Lamb, Goldsmith, & Stenberg, 1983).

The 56-item love scale was reduced by factor analysis to 12 reliable subscales. Scores were then examined for each of the three attachment groups. The next slide shows the results for the newspaper respondents (SLIDE 4). There were significant differences on every dimension. Secure lovers were more likely to characterize their most important love relationship in terms of happiness, friendship, trust, and <u>low</u> fear of closeness, jealousy, and emotional extremes. Avoidant lovers, in describing their most important love relationship, indicated higher fear of closeness, lower acceptance of the partner's faults, and relatively high jealousy and emotional extremes. Anxious/ambivalent lovers were the highest of the three groups on emotional extremes, jealousy, obsessive

preoccupation, sexual attraction, desire for union, desire for reciprocation, and falling in love at first sight. If you are familiar with Dorothy Tennov's (1979) description of "limerence" or Elaine Hatfield's (e.g., Hatfield & Rapson, in press) description of passionate love, you will probably agree that the anxious/ambivalent lovers fit these descriptions well. Although the early phase of romantic love may seem a little "crazy" in most cases, partly because it involves high emotional stakes and low certainty of outcome, it is probably especially crazy when an anxious/ambivalent person is involved.

Although all three groups of respondents averaged 36 years of age, the "most important" romantic relationships of the secure group had lasted 10 years, on the average, compared with only about half that for the two insecure groups. And, not surprisingly, the divorce rate was significantly higher for the insecure groups.

The results concerning mental models of self and relationships are shown in the next slide (SLIDE 5). These are fairly complex, but I will try to summarize the overall pattern briefly. Secure lovers were characterized by their belief that "in some relationships, romantic love really lasts; it doesn't fade with time"; they see themselves as "easier to get to know than most people"; they have fewer self doubts; people reportedly almost always like them; and they see other people as "generally well-intentioned and good-hearted." This "I am good" and "others are good to me" pattern supports Bowlby's claim that a person's mental models of self and other are likely to be complementary. Avoidant lovers were distinguished by their belief that love rarely lasts and is bound to decline in intensity. Anxious/ambivalent lovers were characterized by the beliefs that "it's easy to fall in love" (they feel themselves "beginning to fall in love often") and that "few other people are as willing and able as [they are] to

commit themselves to a long-term relationship." Here again, the beliefs that "I am over-ready for love" and "other people are under-ready" form a complementary pair, which can easily become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Insecure lovers of both kinds, compared with secure lovers, doubt that "real" love is possible (or at least think it rare), feel hard to get to know, think they have more self-doubts than most people, and doubt that other people are generally well-intentioned and good-hearted. All of this fits well with what Bowlby, Ainsworth, and others have written about the three attachment styles, even though their work has been concerned with infants and young children, not adult lovers.

The results concerning childhood relationships with parents were also complex. In both studies, a discriminant function analysis produced two dimensions defined by parent variables which together did a good job of sorting respondents into their self-reported attachment categories. Unfortunately, unlike all the results I've discussed so far, these dimensions were not the same for newspaper readers and college freshmen. For the older sample, the results corresponded closely with theoretical predictions. The first discriminant function distinguished secure from insecure respondents of both kinds; it was defined by an affectionate relationship between mother and father; mother being respectful, confident, accepting, not intrusive, and not demanding; and father being caring, loving, and humorous. In other words, secure respondents saw their parents as especially loving and responsive. The second discriminant function distinguished between the two insecure groups, with avoidant respondents saying more often that their mother was rejecting, not humorous, and not likeable, and the anxious/ambivalent respondents saying that their mother was intrusive and their father unfair. Also, on a number of traits, anxious/ambivalent respondents were more positive--or at least less negative--than avoidant respondents,

suggesting that their experiences with parents were partly positive and partly negative. All of this fits nicely with Ainsworth's data (Ainsworth et al., 1978) from laboratory and home observations indicating the same kinds of differences in maternal behavior towards infants of the three different attachment types.

In our freshman follow-up study, however, the first discriminant function separated anxious/ambivalent respondents, on one hand, from secure and avoidant respondents on the other. The second function then distinguished between the secure and avoidant groups. Examination of each parent-description variable indicated that avoidant freshmen, despite saying some pretty negative things about their parents, also often matched or even surpassed secure subjects in saying laudatory things about them. Suspecting that this might be part of a defensive stance on the part of young avoidant respondents, we reanalyzed the newspaper-survey data, breaking the respondents into two age groups, those under 26 and those 26 or over. Sure enough, the discriminant function analysis for the older respondents stayed the same as before--in line with theoretical expectations. The analysis for younger newspaper respondents, in contrast, was like the one for the similar-aged college students. In the analysis of younger newspaper readers, the avoidant group looked more like the secure group and made many more positive statements about their parents. Our best guess, therefore, is that young avoidant adults maintain (or at least report) an unduly rosy picture of their childhood relationships with parents. As they get older, they are destined to become more realistic, and hence more negative, about these relationships. This interpretation is admittedly post hoc in the case of our study, but it fits well with methodologically different studies of adult attachment styles by Kobak and Sceery (in press) and Main, et al. (1985). In

other words, while complex, our results fit a documented derivation from attachment theory.

Overall, I find the results of our first two studies highly encouraging with respect to an attachment-theory perspective on romantic love. I should make clear, though, before turning to loneliness, that in trying to delineate three styles of romantic attachment we don't mean to deny the existence of a general attachment process called romantic love. On most of our love subscales, all three attachment groups scored on the same side of the scale midpoint, despite significant mean differences. Thus, we have nothing against the idea that for some purposes love may be measured with a single-dimensional scale such as those used by Zick Rubin (1973) and Elaine Hatfield (e.g., Hatfield & Sprecher, 1986). In the same way that every infant has a need for secure attachment, every older person has a capacity for loneliness and for falling in love. The similarity of attachment styles from infancy to adulthood argues not only for differences in love experiences but also for a single set of underlying attachment dynamics--the ones originally outlined by Bowlby.

Attachment Theory and Research on Loneliness

Now, what about loneliness? In our freshman study we included measures of state and trait loneliness; to avoid halo effects, these were administered about a month after the Love Quiz. We found that secure respondents were the least lonely, anxious/ambivalent respondents were the most lonely, and avoidant respondents fell in between. When we looked at individual items, an interesting pattern was suggested. On items that clearly involved a self-attribution of trait loneliness (e.g., "I am a lonely person," "I always was a lonely person"), anxious/ambivalent respondents scored much higher than secure or avoidant respondents. But on certain items that mentioned being distant from other people

without using the word loneliness (e.g., "During the past few years, no one has really known me well"), both avoidant and anxious/ambivalent respondents scored high relative to secure respondents. (See Borys and Perlman, 1985, for a similar analysis of sex differences in loneliness measured by different types of scales.) In other words, avoidant students seemed lonelier according to an indirect definition of loneliness (the one used on the UCLA loneliness scale, which is the most popular measure of loneliness) than when they were asked directly about loneliness itself. Anxious/ambivalent students did not show the same aversion to the term "loneliness." The difference needs to be assessed with measures designed specifically for the purpose, but we tentatively interpret it as another sign of avoidant defensiveness. (Incidentally, Kobak and Sceery, in press, report that acquaintances of avoidant students described them as angry and hostile, but the avoidant students didn't see themselves that way. In contrast, there was no discrepancy between self-reports and other-reports about the negative emotions of anxious/ambivalent students. See Cassidy and Kobak, in press, for an extensive discussion of defensive avoidance.)

More important than our preliminary findings concerning the loneliness levels of people with different attachment styles is the possibility that many of the findings reported in the loneliness literature are compatible with an attachment-theoretical approach to love and loneliness. I have time to mention only a few examples, but they have been deliberately selected to span the range of loneliness research.

First, in studies conducted a few years ago by Carin Rubenstein and myself, we consistently found that loneliness was related to poor relationships with parents during childhood and to the experience of parental divorce, especially if the divorce occurred early in the respondent's life. This fits with Bowlby's

idea that early experiences of rejection and loss can have lasting effects on mental models and the feelings associated with them (Shaver & Rubenstein, 1980).

Second, many investigators, including Rubenstein and me (Rubenstein & Shaver, 1980, 1982a, 1982b), found loneliness to be negatively correlated with self-esteem, and to a rather high degree ($r = -.60$). If we assume that many of the severely lonely respondents in the studies conducted to date were <u>trait</u> lonely (that is, chronically lonely for dispositional rather than situational reasons), it makes sense in terms of attachment theory that they had negative models of self, just as Cindy Hazan and I found insecure lovers to have negative self models in the studies I described a few minutes ago. In other words, low self-esteem is a natural component of a negative model of self based on actual attachment-related experiences.

Third, Anne Peplau and her coworkers (e.g., Michela, Peplau, & Weeks, 1982; Peplau, Meceli, & Morash, 1982) have shown that lonely people tend to have a self-blaming attributional style which makes them vulnerable to a range of chronic negative feelings, including depression. I would like to suggest, as Rubenstein and I did less explicitly in a 1980 paper about childhood antecedents of adult loneliness (Shaver & Rubenstein, 1980), that these attributional patterns be conceptualized in terms of mental models of self and relationships. Researchers have so far studied loneliness attributions in terms of Bernard Weiner's (1985) attribution theory, which makes sense because that theory is well-researched, conceptually powerful, and associated with useful measures. While having no objection to this approach per se, I think it will prove useful in the study of loneliness to learn more about the concrete details of people's causal explanations of their relationship failures. The details have tended to get overlooked in favor of such abstract dimensions as internality and stability.

Consequently, we know relatively little about the concrete contents of trait-lonely people's mental models of self and relationships.

Fourth, Wheeler, Reis, and Nezlek (1983) found that loneliness is inversely related to spending time with females, a finding that held for college students of both sexes. From an attachment-theory viewpoint, females can be considered sensitivity and responsiveness specialists; they are socialized to become maternal experts in the areas of intimacy and nurturance (Rubenstein & Shaver, 1982b; Shaver & Buhrmester, 1983). Interacting with them is, on average, like interacting with a responsive parent. No wonder such interactions reduce loneliness. (Incidentally, this might be a good place to mention that we found no sex differences in our studies of romantic attachment styles, which parallels the absence of sex differences in the infant attachment literature. I suspect that the differences between men and women lie mostly in the mating and caregiving domains, not in the domain of attachment.)

Fifth, research by Gordon Chelune, Warren Jones, Cecilia Solano, and their colleagues (e.g., Chelune, Sultan, & Williams, 1980; Jones, Freemon, & Goswick, 1981; Jones, Hobbs, & Hockenbury, 1982; Sloan & Solano, 1984; Solano, Batten, & Parish, 1982; Williams & Solano, 1983) has revealed some of the social-skills deficits that plague lonely people. Studies by these investigators highlight such issues as inappropriate self-disclosure, self-attention at the expense of attention to interaction partners, inability to establish comfortable intimacy, and negative judgments of self and others. Rather than talk about the detailed findings of those studies, which tend to conflict, I would like to raise the possibility that the findings from such research could be more meaningfully organized and digested if we knew more about the subjects' attachment histories. For example, are the major results produced by people who are <u>transiently</u> lonely

or do they depend on the portion of the sample that is chronically lonely, perhaps for attachment-history reasons? Are the documented deficiencies in self-disclosure all in one direction, or are there some people (probably the anxious/ambivalent) who tend to disclose inappropriately, and others (the avoidant) who resist self-disclosure ? (See Chelune et al., 1980, for relevant methods and findings.) Do all lonely people blame both themselves and others for inadequate relationships, or are there some people (the anxious/ambivalent) who tend to blame themselves, and others (the avoidant) who tend to blame other people? Are all lonely males hostile and aggressive, as an important recent study by Check, Perlman, and Malamuth (1985) seems to imply, or is it just the lonely avoidant males? Existing studies shed little light on these issues because almost no one has explored the social histories of trait lonely people. In fact, few researchers have even distinguished between trait and state loneliness. Findings are usually presented in the form of means or correlations showing a significant connection between some social-skills or emotion variable and loneliness. But, as we know, these average effects sometimes mask meaningful individual differences.

By adhering to current procedures, I'm afraid loneliness researchers have inadvertently given transient loneliness a bad name, associating it with a host of serious-sounding personality deficiencies. Yet transient loneliness seems to me to be a perfectly reasonable and functional emotion, like fear, sadness, or anger; it motivates a healthy person to seek more adequate social relationships. It is a natural component of attachment-system activation. I doubt that it is necessarily associated with social skills deficits, lack of disclosure flexibility, and so on. These more serious problems, which I suspect originate

in troubled attachment histories, are likely to be associated with trait rather than state loneliness (Shaver, Furman, & Buhrmester, 1985).

Overview of the Three Types

To tie together what I have said so far and refer indirectly to many of the attachment studies I haven't had time to mention, let me characterize the three kinds of people I have been talking about--oversimplifying, no doubt, but hopefully not in a misleading way.

Some of us are relatively secure with respect to close relationships. We have enjoyed reasonably sensitive and responsive parenting, have generally gotten along well with peers and teachers at school (Sroufe, Schork, Frosso, Lawroski, & LaFreniere, 1984), can easily and nondefensively remember both joyful and painful childhood interactions with parents (Main, Kaplan, & Cassidy, 1985), find it relatively easy to trust the people we fall in love with, and are destined, on the average, to have longer love relationships and more satisfying marriages. We experience the full range of human emotions, including loneliness, but experience loneliness transiently when our relationships are deficient or broken. Generally, we feel reasonably good about ourselves and have favorable reactions to other people. We are relatively easy to interact with partly because we are flexible, aware of self-disclosure norms, relaxed, and affectively positive.

In contrast, some of us are anxious/ambivalent in close relationships. We received inconsistent parenting and learned to cry, protest, and cling in an effort to enhance security. As early as nursery school or kindergarten we were perceived as "impulsive and tense and/or helpless and fearful" (reported by Sroufe, 1983; quotation is from Erickson, Sroufe, and Egelund, 1985, p. 149). Our relationships with teachers and peers were troubled, although not so much that we were left without a network of friends (Kobak & Sceery, in press). When

asked in adult interviews about our childhood relationships with parents, we can access memories but the memories don't seem to form a coherent picture. As adults, we are perhaps too eager to self-disclose and too desirous of acceptance and interpersonal union, which burdens potential relationship partners. Peers perceive us as anxious and low in what psychologists call "ego-resilience" (Kobak & Sceery, in press). We readily experience and express loneliness and are likely to view ourselves as chronically lonely (Hazan & Shaver, 1986).

Finally, some of us are <u>avoidant</u> in close relationships. We received fairly consistent rebuffs in response to our early efforts to form a secure attachment. By the time we went to school we experienced conflict and dissatisfaction in relationships with peers, and teachers described us as "hostile, socially isolated, and/or disconnected" (Sroufe, 1983; quoted from Erickson et al., 1985, p. 149). Similarly, by the time we were of college age, our friends and acquaintances perceived us as irritable, hostile, and distant (Kobak & Sceery, in press), and although we were reluctant to adopt a self-attribution of "loneliness," we were aware of our distance from peers and family (Kobak & Sceery, in press; Hazan & Shaver, 1986). Sometimes we felt sorry about this; at other times we felt defiant and determined to get by on our own. When asked now about our childhood relationships with parents, we give idealized answers which can't be backed up with detailed evidence. Either we can't think of examples of parental support at all, or we begin telling what we intend to be an example of support, and (as it emerges from memory) it proves to reveal just the opposite. This tendency to repress past experiences may decrease with age, perhaps due to supportive corrective relationship experiences (Hazan & Shaver, 1986). If we <u>are</u> able to work through these painful memories, it seems to have an important beneficial effect on relationships with our own children (Main et al., 1985). If

not we will have persistent troubles trusting and opening up in love relationships and, based on our actual experiences, will sincerely doubt that "real" love exists.

Love as a System of Behavioral Systems

This view of love as attachment and of trait loneliness as the absence of secure attachment, first suggested by Robert Weiss and then elaborated by me and others during the past several years, is still woefully incomplete. As I mentioned earlier, Bowlby and Ainsworth, following a line of thinking developed by ethologists, proposed that, biologically speaking, human beings are a collection of behavioral systems. If we consider attachment, sexual mating, and caregiving to be three such systems, we can conceptualize love more broadly as a system of these systems. This is how Cindy Hazan, Donna Bradshaw, and I (Shaver et al., in press) have proposed to deal with the role of sexual attraction in romantic passion and the changes over the course of a relationship in the relative importance of various behavioral systems. In a forthcoming chapter entitled "What Ever Happened to Old-Fashioned Lust?", Ellen Berscheid (in press) calls our attention to the sexual component of love. Besides being important to the experience of love, sexual attraction is obviously crucial to romantic love's original biological function, which I think was to assure reproduction and at the same time cement a relationship between parents that might increase the survival chances of mother and offspring (cf. Barrash, 1986). Robert Sternberg (1986) has recently addressed the second issue: the different relationship-developmental courses of the distinct components of love. He distinguishes between passion, intimacy, and commitment and argues that each of these exhibits its own temporal pattern.

My own view is that the initial phase of romantic love is fueled by a mixture of: sexual attraction and gratification, reduced feelings of loneliness, uncertainty about the security of the developing attachment, and excitement due to exploration of the novelty of another human being. With time, sexual attraction wanes, attachment anxieties either fade or lead to conflict and withdrawal, novelty gets replaced by familiarity, and lovers either find themselves securely attached and caring deeply about each other or experiencing some form of distress--boredom, disappointment, loneliness, or hostility--and yearning for a more satisfying relationship (Shaver & Hazan, 1985). When two lovers get beyond being preoccupied with novelty, unpredictability, and urgent sexual attraction, they more readily detect deficiencies in each other's caregiving behavior and probably weigh this factor more heavily in their decisions about the equity and commitment-worthiness of their relationship (Hatfield, Traupmann, Sprecher, Utne, & Hay, 1985; Sternberg, 1986). This is the time when women, generally the better caregivers, are likely to see more problems in the relationship than men do.

So far, no one has attempted to study or to explain in detail how the three behavioral systems--attachment, sexuality, and caregiving--function together in a satisfactory relationship. It is already clear, however, in a study of married couples being conducted by Roger Kobak and Cindy Hazan at the University of Denver that a troubled attachment history can interfere with marital communication, sexual relations, and mutual caregiving. Harlow's well-known research on motherless monkeys (e.g., Harlow & Mears, 1979) should have led us to expect these findings. Remember, Harlow showed that inadequately mothered infant monkeys grow up to be inadequate sexual partners and parents.

Conclusion

This sorry statement leads to a final question and some final comments. Does an attachment-theoretical approach to love and loneliness imply that our fates are sealed by age 1 or 2? The answer, fortunately, is no. First of all, there is evidence that a change in parental circumstances can bring about a change in a child's attachment behavior--mediated, presumably, by a change in parenting style (e.g., Egeland & Sroufe, 1981a, 1981b; Thompson, Lamb, & Estes, 1982; Vaughn, Egeland, Sroufe, & Waters, 1979). Secondly, in recent studies by Mary Main and her colleagues (e.g., Main et al., 1985) there is evidence that some adults who endured rather severely disturbed relationships with parents during childhood now function securely and have a secure relationship with their own children (contrary to the marked general tendency toward cross-generational continuity in attachment styles: Main et al., 1985; Ricks, 1985). These people's secret seems to be a reorganization of mental models of self and relationships, a reorganization based partly on recognition and acceptance of past negative experiences. We know little at the moment about how these transformations in attachment style are accomplished--presumably with the help of "therapeutic" relationships of some kind, either planned or fortuitous. (See Cassidy & Kobak, in press, for suggestions concerning deliberate therapeutic strategies for dealing with defensive avoidance.)

Probing the causes and dynamics of these transformations is just one of many challenges awaiting personality, social, developmental, and clinical psychologists who pursue an attachment-theoretical approach to love and loneliness. As I hope you can see, I find this to be a very promising and provocative avenue of theory and research. And I have high expectations for its further development during the next few years.

Thank you!

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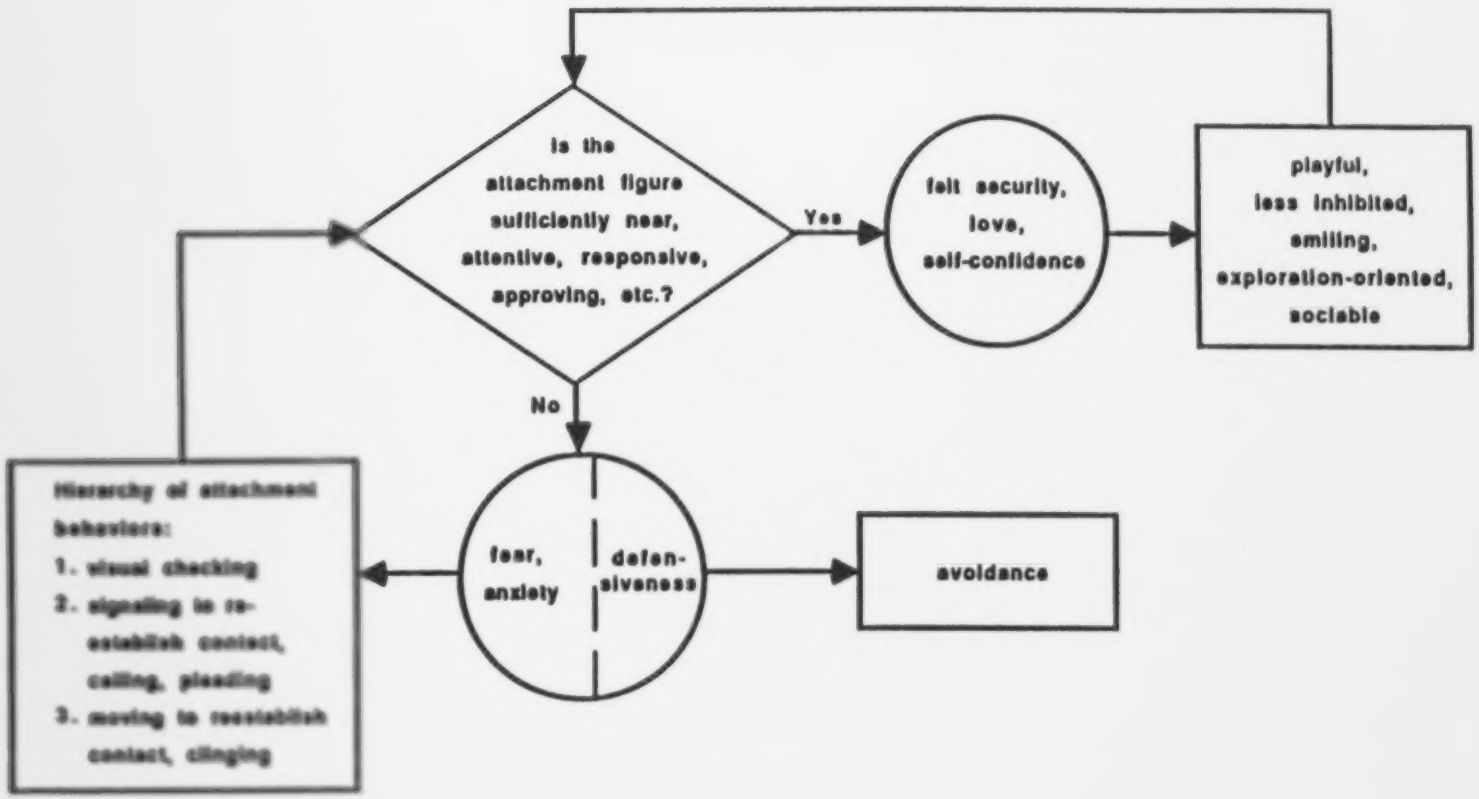

Figure 1.

The dynamics of infant-mother attachment and adult romantic love. The diamond represents a "test" (as in Miller, Galanter, & Pribram's, 1960, test-operate-test-exit model of behavior); circles represent emotions and squares represent behaviors. The term "sufficiently" in the test question implies that the degree of proximity (and emotional closeness, in the case of adult lovers) is influenced by relationship history and current psychological state (including such things as pain, illness, fatigue, stress, and novelty).

"Slide 1"

SOME FEATURES OF ATTACHMENT AND ADULT ROMANTIC LOVE

ATTACHMENT	ROMANTIC LOVE
Formation and quality of the attachment bond depend on the attachment figure's perceived sensitivity and responsivensss.	Romantic love includes an intense desire for the partner's (real or imagined) interest and reciprocation.
Infant's feelings of joy and distress depend on the attachment figure's perceived availability and responsiveness.	Adult lover's moods depend on his/her current perceptions of the partner's reciprocation or rejection.
When the infant's attachment relationship is secure, he/she is happier, has a higher threshold for distress, is more willing to explore unfamiliar environments and interact with strangers.	When adults are in love, they often report feeling more relaxed, less worried, less defensive, more creative and spontaneous, and more courageous.
Attachment behaviors include: maintenance of proximity and contact--holding, touching, caressing, kissing, rocking, smiling, making eye contact, following, etc.	Adult romantic love is indicated by: holding, touching, caressing, kissing, rocking, smiling, making eye contact, following, etc.
Separation from the attachment figure causes intense distress, initiates vigorous, attention-consuming reunion efforts, and results in despair if reunion proves impossible.	Unchosen separation from the partner causes intense distress, initiates vigorous, attention-consuming reunion efforts, and results in grief if reunion is impossible.
Intense desire to share discoveries and reactions with the attachment figure.	Intense desire to share discoveries, feelings, points of view, etc., and to give gifts to one's love partner.
Infants coo, "sing," talk baby talk, etc., and attachment figures talk "motherese."	Adult lovers coo, sing, talk baby talk, use affectionate, baby-like names for each other.

"Slide 2"

ADULT ATTACHMENT TYPES AND THEIR FREQUENCIES

Question:

Which of the following best describes your feelings?

Answers and Percentages:	Newspaper Sample	University Sample
Secure:		
I find it relatively easy to get close to others and am comfortable depending on them and having them depend on me. I don't often worry about being abandoned or about someone getting too close to me.	53%	56%
Avoidant:		
I am somewhat uncomfortable being close to others; I find it difficult to trust them completely, difficult to allow myself to depend on them. I am nervous when anyone gets too close, and often, love partners want me to be more intimate than I feel comfortable being.	26%	23%
Anxious-Ambivalent:		
I find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like. I often worry that my partner doesn't really love me or won't want to stay with me. I want to merge completely with another person, and this desire sometimes scares people away.	20%	20%

"Slide 3"

Attachment Style and the Experience of Love

	Attachment Type		
	Avoidant	Anxious/Amb.	Secure
Happiness	3.19	3.31	3.51
Friendship	3.18	3.19	3.50
Trust	3.11	3.13	3.43
Fear of Closeness	2.30	2.15	1.88
Acceptance	2.86	3.03	3.01
Emotional Extremes	2.75	3.05	2.36
Jealousy	2.57	2.88	2.17
Obsessive Preoccupation	3.01	3.29	3.01
Sexual Attraction	3.27	3.43	3.27
Desire for Union	2.81	3.25	2.69
Desire for Reciprocation	3.24	3.55	3.22
Love at First Sight	2.91	3.17	2.97

Note: Statistically significant differences between means within a row are indicated by underlining. Where one mean differs from the other two, which do not differ significantly from each other, that one is underlined. Where one mean differs significantly from one other, both are underlined. Where all three differ significantly from each other, all three are underlined.

"Slide 4"

Mental Model Element	Avoidant	Anxious/Amb.	Secure
1. The kind of head-over-heels romantic love depicted in novels and movies doesn't exist in real life.	.25	.28	.13
2. Intense romantic love is common at the beginning of a relationship, but it rarely lasts forever.	.41	.34	.28
3. Romantic feelings wax and wane over the course of a relationship, but at times they can be as intense as they were at the start.	.60	.75	.79
4. In some relationships, romantic love really lasts; it doesn't fade with time.	.41	.46	.59
5. It's easy to fall in love. I feel myself beginning to fall in love often.	.04	.20	.09
6. It's rare to find someone you can really fall in love with.	.66	.56	.43
7. I am easier to get to know than most people.	.32	.32	.60
8. I have more self-doubts than most people.	.48	.64	.18
9. People almost always like me.	.36	.41	.68
10. People often misunderstand me or fail to appreciate me.	.36	.50	.18
11. Few people are as willing and able as I am to commit themselves to a long-term relationship.	.24	.59	.23
12. People are generally well-intentioned and good-hearted.	.44	.32	.72

"Slide 5"